LISTENING TO LOCAL VOICES: ACCOUNTABILITY AND FEEDBACK PLANS

"How-To" Guide on Developing an AFP

Accountability and Feedback Plans (AFPs) seek to improve the work of USAID and its partners by integrating local voices, including constituent (beneficiary) feedback, into activity planning and implementation.

ADS 201 requires a Beneficiary Feedback Plan as part of the Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (AMELP) to (1) request regular feedback directly from beneficiaries to validate the quality and relevance of activities and (2) respond to that feedback. AFPs are an enhanced version of that requirement, identifying key voices (including beneficiaries and others) that implementing partners and USAID will consult to understand different perspectives on activity implementation and its potential impact on communities. In particular, consideration should be given to intentionally reaching and consulting underserved and marginalized voices including, women, youth, with particular focus on girls, LGBTQI+, indigenous and persons with disabilities.

> **ADS 201.3.4.10.A.** requires AMELPs to "[establish] effective procedures for collecting and responding to feedback from beneficiaries."

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The New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) requires an AFP section in every AMELP for the activities it funds. Non-NPI activities may also use AFPs to advance to agencies Localization and DEIA goals. The process of completing AFPs ensures that partners and USAID hear constituent needs, build better relationships, and earn trust.

★ Adjust these basic guidelines to fit Mission needs and your own community and country contexts.

WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY?

Accountability: the obligation to explain, justify, and take responsibility for one's actions.

For USAID, this means being as accountable to people in the communities where we work as we are to the American taxpayer.

WHAT IS FEEDBACK?

Feedback: reactions to a product, a person's performance of a task, or anything else for which reactions can be used as a basis for improvement.

For USAID, feedback means a diversity of perspectives the Agency can incorporate into activity planning and implementation to elevate key voices and community priorities.

What is the value of soliciting and incorporating diverse perspectives into activity implementation?

It helps USAID and its partners:
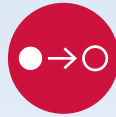
Explore perceptions of the **relevance** of interventions to constituents

Explore perceptions of **fair access** to USAID-funded interventions and assistance

Explore perceptions of the **quality** of interventions

Explore perceptions of the degree to which different groups **feel they are contributing to decisions**

Build **local leadership and community support** for the activity

Increase **trust and cooperation**

Identify opportunities to **adapt** activities

Advance **equity, inclusion, and accessibility**

EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

Equity = the quality of being fair and unbiased; equity involves an ongoing process of assessing barriers and addressing inequities for optimal programming outcomes

Inclusion = the practice of creating an environment that allows for the participation of marginalized communities and actively ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities

Accessibility = the ability of goods or services to be easily accessed, used, and understood by a wide range of users, including users with visual, auditory, motor, or cognitive disabilities, as well as those who may encounter language, geographical, or other barriers

To determine whether an activity is equitable, inclusive, and accessible, ask yourself:

- Were all affected populations (including marginalized populations) consulted before making key decisions on priorities and implementation?

- What key decisions will be made during the activity, and who has decision authority?

- Who might this activity unintentionally harm?

To learn about relevant diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility issues in your particular country context, refer to your Mission's NPI Action Plan.

My AFP Journey

Who will I collect feedback from?

What questions will I ask?

How will I collect the feedback?

What will I do with the feedback?

What's next?

Who will I collect feedback from?

Ask yourself:

? **Which voices are relevant to your activity? Here are examples:**

✔ Direct constituents: the people who are directly engaged in your activity

✔ Indirect constituents: the greater community, subcontractors, subgrantees, groups representing marginalized communities, marginalized populations themselves, government officials when appropriate, etc.

? **Which constituents might have input on issues such as:**

Intervention relevance

Does the activity address an important need? Is that a priority over other needs?

Implementation improvement

What could USAID or others do to improve the activity?

Results or perceived results

What has the activity achieved? What do constituents believe it has achieved?

Fair access

Can any interested constituent participate in events and opportunities?

Tip: Solicit feedback from any number of constituents or any type of constituent. The feedback must represent the perspectives of all relevant voices collectively.

What questions will I ask?

Think of topics that are priorities for each feedback group, then draft questions for each priority topic and group.

EXAMPLE AFP QUESTIONS

Priorities	Implementation	Equity/Inclusion/Accessibility
• How important is [issue] to your life on a scale of 1-5, where 1 means "[issue] does not have a large impact on the quality of my life" and 5 means "[issue] has a high impact on the quality of my life" {Closed-ended question} • Why? {Open-ended question}	• How well is [intervention] being implemented on a scale of 1-5? • What is working best and why? • What could be improved and how?	• How fair was the selection process to determine who could participate in [intervention] on a scale of 1-5? • How can the team improve equity in access to [intervention]? • What are the barriers that preclude access or participation in programming?

Don't forget to ask constituents for improvement ideas. Later, close the feedback loop by letting them know how you integrated their recommendations or why you did not.

TIPS

Consider data collection and analysis burdens. (Don't include too many questions!) Pair closed-ended and open-ended questions, asking only two questions for each issue.

Use standardized questions to help improve reliability and reduce unconscious bias.

Ensure your questions are clear by doing a preliminary mock interview and making adjustments before interviewing constituents.

Translate key terms carefully. Use reverse translation to double-check for accuracy.

Adapt questions and use a format that is easily understood and can be accessed by specific marginalized groups, such as youth, indigenous groups and people with disabilities.

How will I collect the feedback?

You have two options for collecting feedback:

1 Directly query constituents, or

2 Leverage existing information-gathering opportunities: routine activity monitoring, third-party monitoring, event evaluation forms, community meetings, social media, etc. By adding relevant AFP questions to existing data collection activities, you can avoid spending additional funds.

Remember: Attend to issues of confidentiality and security, and refrain from listing names and identifying information about specific local organizations or individuals in vulnerable situations that are contributing to assisting USAID's programs to become more inclusive. Please refer to Additional Help for ADS 201: Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle and in Mission Operations.

Tip: Train enumerators carefully. Develop their capacity to motivate complete and accurate answers from respondents.

What will I do with the feedback?

Analyze the data and identify themes emerging from different groups (e.g., women, ethnic groups, communities from specific geographic areas, etc.). Over time, routine themes may develop that you can validate across various data collection points.

Implementing partners need to provide a fair representative summary of the feedback in regular reporting to USAID and properly store complete feedback data so it can be easily accessed upon request.

Here is an example of an AFP report summary table:

Actionable Finding	Source and Date	Follow-Up Action	Date Follow-Up Action Completed
Women may be uncomfortable in mixed gender classes	Saffron Field Demonstration Evaluation Form, June 2019	Future classes will have separate male and female groups	All field demonstrations from September onward have separate female and male classes
Four participants in the access to finance workshop found the workshop only "somewhat useful" or "not useful at all"	Third-party monitoring survey, July 2019	A rapid focus group will be conducted with participants to determine how to make access to the finance workshop more useful	Focus group is set for August 2019
The field demonstration and materials were only available in Dari, but participants' primary language was Nurastani	Subcontractor July Meeting, July 2019	Subcontractor will confirm the appropriate language for each demonstration and prepare translated materials if necessary	Language checks implemented for all demonstrations since August

WHEN YOU COLLECT BETTER FEEDBACK, YOU WILL…

✔ Give constituents more power over the activity

✔ Discover innovations that improve results and sustainability of the activity

✔ Increase equity for marginalized populations

What's next?

When project implementation changes, AFPs need to adapt. Assess AFPs periodically (for example, every year, along with the rest of the AMELP), to ensure you are collecting relevant and sufficient feedback to make adjustments, as necessary.

To ensure your AFP is adapting properly to the project, ask yourself:

How well are we collecting feedback from relevant constituents (direct and indirect)?

How well do reports to USAID summarize the data?

How well are we developing recommendations to address actionable findings?

How well are we implementing recommendations?

How well are we reporting AFP findings and actions to the community?

Tip: Through iterative design—the practice of creating, testing, and revising—you will improve the quality and functionality of your AFP. Don't hesitate to make adjustments to improve the plan as you implement the activity.

Where can I find more information?

NPI Accountability and Feedback Plans Job Aid

"Inclusive Development Analysis" section of "Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle and in Mission Operations."

On listening: Listening to Those Who Matter Most and The Power of Information in Community Monitoring

On planning: Guide to Digital Feedback Loops

On data privacy: Data Security Guidance: Protecting Beneficiaries and Considerations for Using Data Responsibly at USAID

Example reporting: Somalia: Strengthening Accountability to Affected People